

MISSOURI PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

WHEN DID PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES BEGIN IN MISSOURI?

The Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project, a state-sponsored initiative for school-improvement, began during the 2003-2004 school year and evolved from the Missouri Accelerated Schools Project which had served as a school reform initiative for many years. The Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project began with staff located in four regional professional development centers. Each year since then the interest and participation in the professional learning communities process has increased. During the 2007-2008 school year, the need for professional learning communities support resulted in nearly doubling the number of staff statewide with resources now available in each of the nine regional professional development centers.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

In the Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project, any school or district, at any level, can begin the professional learning communities process. The state PLC school-improvement model focuses on increasing student achievement by building the capacity of school personnel to create and sustain the conditions that promote high levels of student and adult learning. Commitment to and participation in trainings by school leaders is a vital component of becoming an effective professional learning community.

WHAT "DRIVES" A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

Professional learning communities see student learning, not teaching, as their mission. The policies, instruction, curriculum, programs, professional development, and other functions of the school all support student learning. In maintaining this constant focus on learning, four questions become paramount:

1. What should students know and be able to do?
2. How will the school determine that students have learned

the essential knowledge and skills?

3. How will the school respond when students do not learn?
4. How will the school respond when they already know it?

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL THAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

1. The daily work of the school is driven by common purpose, shared vision and collective commitments.
2. There are high expectations regarding student achievement and a commitment on the part of staff to accept responsibility for student learning.
3. The learning of each student is monitored on a timely basis using common core curriculum and common assessments aligned with state standards.
4. School structures support student learning and provide additional time and support for students who initially do not achieve intended outcomes.
5. Job-embedded professional development leads to the collective identification of, reflection about, and implementation of “best practices” for improved student achievement.
6. Staff members work collaboratively in processes that foster continuous improvement in all indicators of student achievement.
7. The use of data promotes an action orientation and focus on results.
8. Leadership of school improvement processes is widely dispersed and helps sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

WHAT TRAINING AND SUPPORT ARE AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOLS IN THE MISSOURI PLC PROJECT?

The nine Regional Professional Development Centers offer comprehensive ongoing training, technical assistance, and support through the Professional Learning Communities Project which is generally considered a three-year process model. Schools entering the Project form Leadership Teams of four to six people – one of whom must be an administrator. Together they attend a summer academy and monthly training meetings throughout the school year. The Leadership Team serves as leaders within their own schools. Teams from continuing schools (schools which have completed first year training) attend trainings three or four times per year. On-site assistance and mentoring visits are provided to each school throughout the three-year process. Professional learning community teams are encouraged to participate in a two-day Powerful Learning Conference focused on professional development for student and adult learning. Additional workshops, trainings and professional development opportunities are offered throughout the year by the regional PLC staff and other regional professional development center staff.

HOW MANY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES ARE IN MISSOURI?

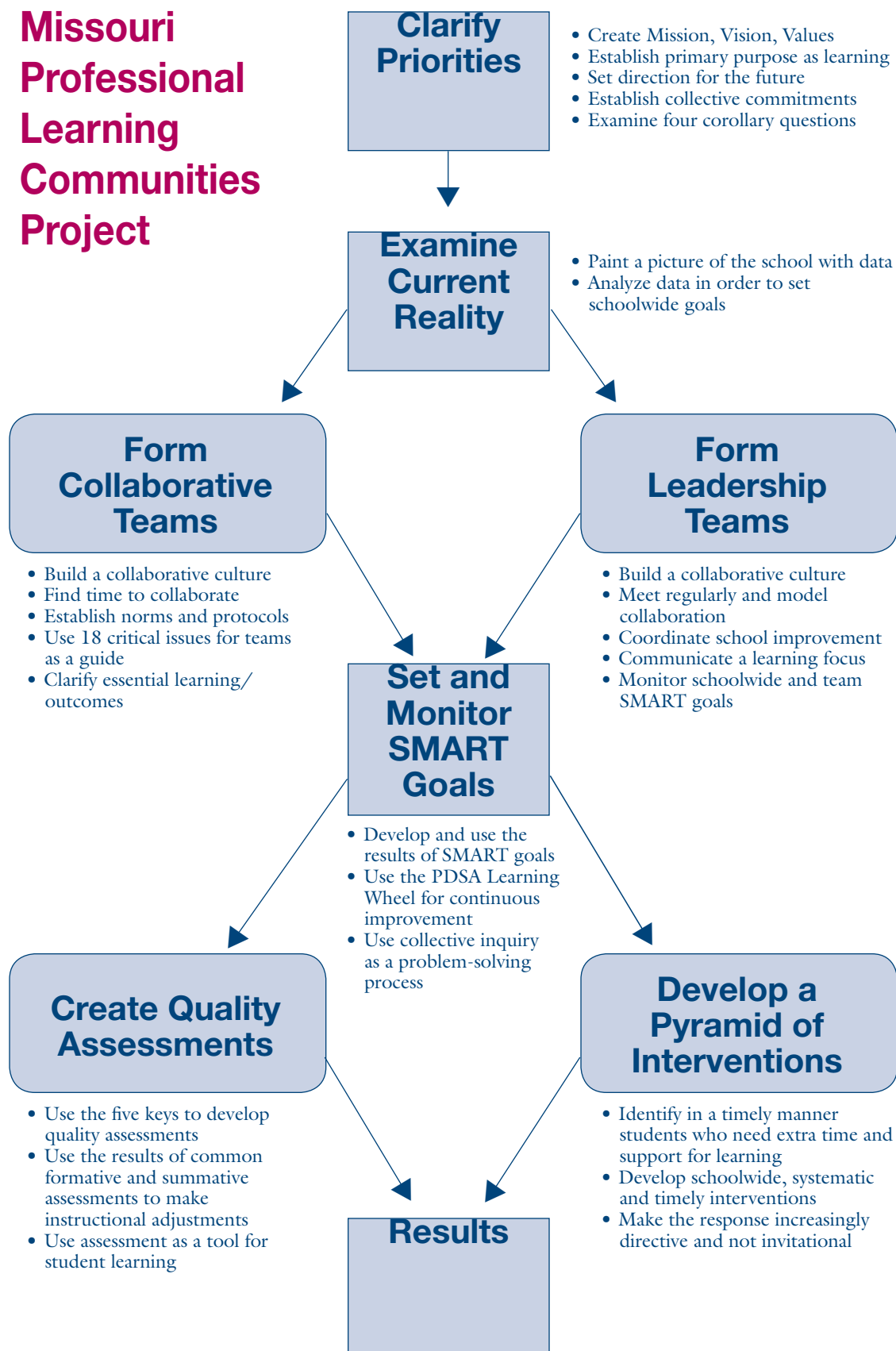
Many schools that were formerly in the Missouri Accelerated Schools Project have continued professional development in the professional learning communities process. In addition to that number, nearly 300 schools have participated in the Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project since it began in 2003. Countless other schools and districts have benefited from the workshops and conferences coordinated by the PLC staff or that have been given in collaboration with the other programs for school improvement found in the regional professional development centers.

HOW CAN MY SCHOOL BECOME A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

For more information, contact the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Professional Learning Communities Project Director or the regional center in which your district resides. Contact information is listed on the back of this fact sheet.



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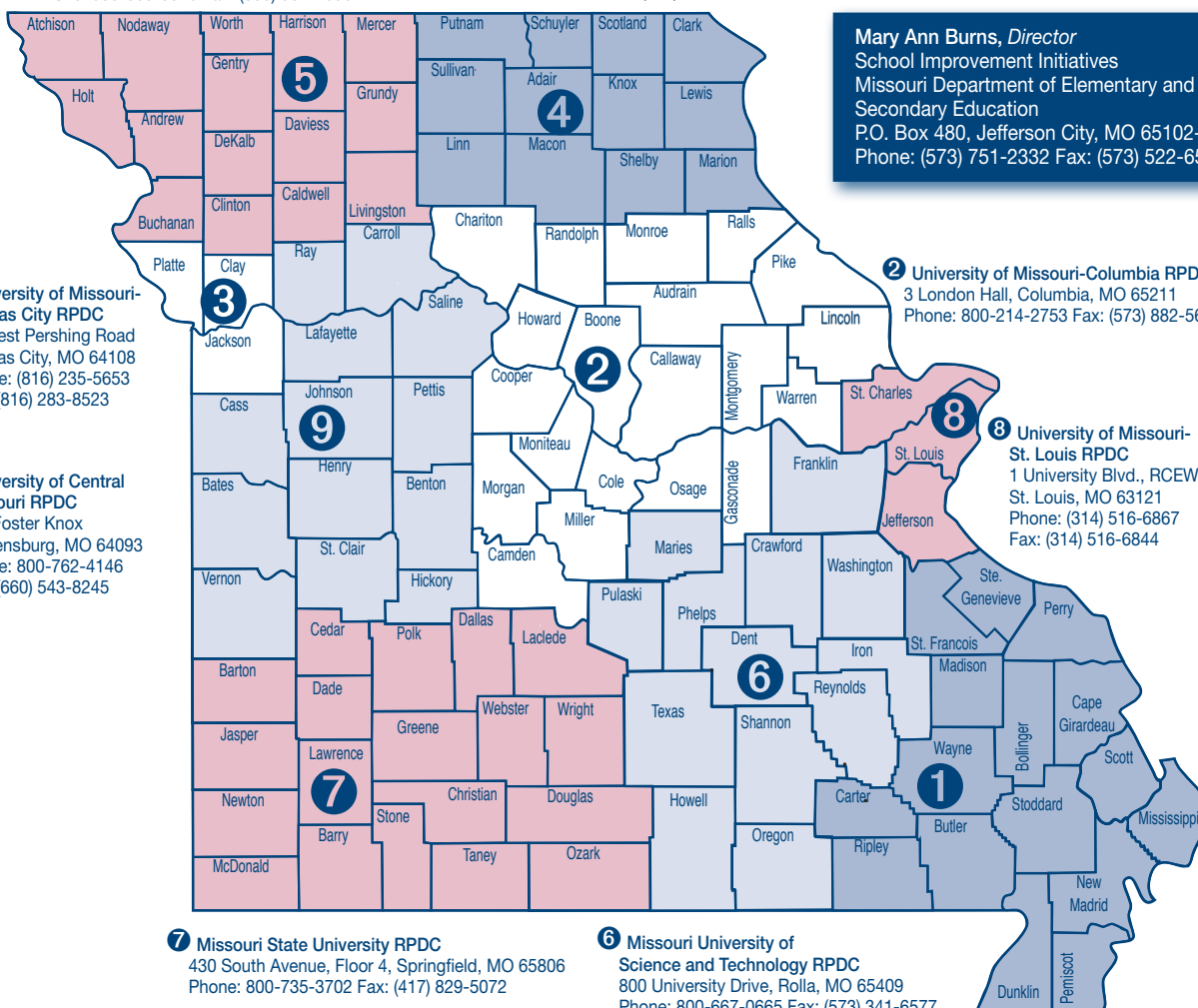
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